



Official Guide to **SOUTH AFRICA** 2021/22

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



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South Africa continues to conduct its foreign relations in accordance with the values and principles set out in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, which states that the President is ultimately responsible for the foreign policy and international relations of South Africa. It is the President's prerogative to appoint heads of mission, to receive foreign heads of mission, to conduct state-to-state relations, and to negotiate and sign all international agreements.

The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation is entrusted with the formulation, promotion, execution and daily conduct of South Africa's foreign policy, but, according to the Constitution, it is the president who is ultimately responsible for South Africa's foreign policy and international relations. It is the president's prerogative to appoint heads of mission, receive foreign heads of mission, conduct interstate relations, and negotiate and sign all international agreements. All international agreements must be tabled in Parliament.

Agreements that are not of a technical, administrative, or executive nature bind South Africa only after being approved by Parliament, which also approves the country's ratification of or accession to multilateral agreements.

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation's (DIRCO) overall mandate is to work for the realisation of South Africa's foreign policy objectives. This is done by:

- coordinating and aligning South Africa's international relations;
- monitoring international developments;
- communicating government's policy positions;
- developing and advising government on policy options to create mechanisms and avenues for achieving objectives;
- protecting South Africa's sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- contributing to the creation of an enabling international environment for South African businesses;
- sourcing developmental assistance; and
- assisting South African citizens abroad.

Over the medium term, the department planned to continue focusing on advancing the African Agenda, including curbing the impact of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the continent; participating actively in the United Nations (UN); and enhancing the management of its infrastructure portfolio in foreign missions. The DIRCO strives to be a positive contributor to the global family of nations and to promote the aspirations for a peaceful, prosperous and united Africa in a just and equitable world. These are difficult goals to pursue, challenged by complex shifts in global relations and unprecedented global instability.

Advancing the African Agenda

South Africa's foreign policy focuses on building unity, inclusive economic development and shared prosperity for the African continent and its people.

Accordingly, the department will continue to play an active role in the structures and processes of the African Union (AU) to advance peace and security, and prevent conflict in Africa.

South Africa continues to be at the forefront of efforts to strengthen and capacitate the AU to address challenges more effectively such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and harness the opportunities presented to Africa in a constantly shifting geopolitical landscape. South Africa's position at the Group of Twenty (G20) enables it to continue advocating for debt relief and developmental assistance for Africa.

The appointment of President Cyril Ramaphosa by the Director-General of the World Health Organisation as co-chair of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator had elevated South Africa's role in seeking equal access to COVID-19 vaccines for all African countries. The DIRCO's role is to encourage embassies to promote the President's work as co-chair.

In addition, as part of responding to the pandemic, the COVID-19 Response Fund was established by the AU to raise additional funds for the African Centres for Disease Control, and lobby for a comprehensive and robust economic stimulus package for Africa to mitigate the negative economic impact of the pandemic.

Active participation in the UN

With its near-universal membership and vast agenda, the UN remains the most influential multilateral institution and global governance centre. Accordingly, over the medium term, South Africa will continue its engagements with the UN to advance the country's foreign policy priorities in matters such as climate change, sustainable development, human rights law, terrorism, international criminal law, gender equity, economic relations and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Managing infrastructure projects and properties

The department's international property portfolio comprises of 127 state-owned properties and more than 1 000 rented properties. Over the medium-term period, it plans to reduce its rental portfolio and the associated operational costs by developing one property in Luanda, Angola, and one property in Gaborone, Botswana, on state-owned vacant land. It also plans to assess the condition of the state-owned properties within its portfolio over the medium term, beginning with those in Africa, to determine the need for maintenance, repairs and renovations to extend their lifespans.

International relations

The DIRCO aims to strengthen political, economic and social relations through structured bilateral agreements and high-level engagements to advance South Africa's national priorities, the African Agenda and South-South cooperation on an ongoing basis.

- **Africa** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with individual countries in Africa, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, foreign direct investment with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has representation in 47 diplomatic missions in Africa.
- **Asia and Middle East** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with individual countries in Asia and the Middle East, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, foreign direct investment with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has representation in 30 diplomatic missions in Asia and the Middle East.
- **Americas and Caribbean** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with individual countries in the Americas and the Caribbean, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, foreign direct investment with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has representation in 13 diplomatic missions in the Americas and the Caribbean.
- **Europe** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with individual countries in Europe, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, foreign direct investment with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has representation in 23 diplomatic missions in Europe.

African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund

The African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund was established in terms of the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund Act of 2000 to enhance cooperation between South Africa and other countries, particularly those in Africa, through the promotion of democracy and good governance, the prevention and resolution of conflict, socioeconomic development and integration, the provision of humanitarian assistance, and the development of human resources.

Over the medium-term period, the fund aimed to focus on promoting democracy and good governance, particularly in Africa; providing training to ensure the transfer of knowledge and practical skills in African countries; and supporting projects that enhance African trade, economic development and integration. All of the fund's expenditure goes towards transfers and subsidies to projects aligned with these areas of focus.

African Union

The AU is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. It was officially launched in Durban in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). Africa Day is celebrated annually on 25 May within the African continent to mark the formation of the OAU on 25 May 1963 and the AU in 2002, as well as chart the progress made by the continent since then to advance democracy, peace, stability and socio-economic development.

The day is an opportunity to promote African unity, deepen regional integration and recommit Africa to a common destiny. South Africa marked Africa Month 2021 under the theme: “Year for Arts, Culture and Heritage in the Year of Charlotte Maxeke”. The 2021 Africa Month programme, among other objectives, sought to promote regional integration by strengthening people-to-people contact and harmonise policies, and share skills and expertise.

International bodies

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa

BRICS is an association of five major emerging countries, which together represent about 42% of the global population, 23% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 30% of the territory and 18% of the global trade.

South Africa’s membership of BRICS enables the country to employ additional and powerful tools in its fight to address the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality through increased trade, investment, tourism, capacity building, skills and technology transfers.

India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA)

The IBSA Dialogue Forum brings together three large pluralistic, multicultural and multiracial societies from three continents as a purely South-South grouping of like-minded countries committed to inclusive sustainable development, in pursuit of the well-being of their peoples and those of the developing world. The principles, norms and values underpinning the IBSA Dialogue Forum are participatory democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and the strengthening of multilateralism.

The realisation of the trilateral alliance between IBSA stems from three commonalities between the three countries, namely: all three countries are vibrant democracies, they share common views on various global issues and are substantial emerging economies within their sub-regions.

UN General Assembly (UNGA)

Established in 1945 under the Charter of the UN, the UNGA occupies a central position as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN. Comprised of all 193 members of the UN, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the

Charter. It also plays a significant role in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law. The UNGA meets from September to December each year.

UN Security Council (UNSC)

The UNSC has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 members, and each member has one vote. Under the Charter of the UN, all member states are obligated to comply with UNSC decisions.

The UNSC takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the UNSC can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorise the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security. The year 2021 was the third year as a non-permanent member of the UNSC.

Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent member countries. Membership is diverse and includes both developed and developing countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe and the South Pacific. Since rejoining the Commonwealth in 1994, South Africa has interacted closely with the work of the Commonwealth contributing politically, financially and in terms of capacity and expertise to the work of the organisation.

Non-Aligned Movement

The NAM, consisting of 120 members, is the largest political grouping of countries outside the UN, making it an important lobby group of developing countries in global affairs. South Africa formally joined the movement in 1994 and has played a leading role in NAM deliberations and meetings ever since.

Group of Twenty

South Africa has been a permanent member of the G20 since its inception in 1999 following the Asian financial crises. The G20 was established to increase multilateral cooperation for the recovery of the global economy, to bring stability to the global financial system, to promote long-term sustainable growth and to strengthen global economic governance.

The G20 economies account for 85% of the global GDP, 80% of world trade and two-thirds of the world's population. South Africa also works together closely with the following international bodies and organisations to ensure that it benefits from trade, investment, industrialisation and innovation to address the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment, as espoused in the National Development Plan:

- World Trade Organisation.

- World Economic Forum.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- International Labour Organisation.
- World Intellectual Property Organisation.

World Health Organisation (WHO)

South Africa is one of the 194 member states that constitute the WHO. The country takes part in the annual World Health Assembly (WHA), which is the WHO's supreme decision-making body. South Africa also participates in the WHO's annual Regional Committee for Africa, which reflects on the decisions taken at the WHA, particularly those relevant to the continent.

New Development Bank (NDB)

The NDB was established in 2014 to strengthen cooperation among the BRICS group of countries, and complements the efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global development.